



Assessment of Curriculum Delivery in Basic Education Schools and Security Challenges in some States of Northern Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper identified some of the major security challenges that Nigeria is facing, which include banditry, kidnapping, insurgency and Boko Haram with particular focus on some States of Northern Nigeria. These challenges have led to loss of lives and properties including having a negative impact on the education sector through low enrolment or poor attendance in schools and partial or complete closure of schools. It also defined Basic Education as a programme that comprises of early childhood education, primary education and junior secondary school educational programme. In addition, the paper has defined curriculum as any documented educational programme that specifies the subjects/courses, goals, methods, materials and required assessments to effectively support instruction and learning. Curriculum is also defined as the totality of all what happens (both academic and non-academic activities) in a school. Moreover, it defined security as protection of a person, building, organization, or country against threats such as crime or attacks by foreign countries. Furthermore, it is the state of being or feeling secure; freedom from fear, anxiety, danger, doubt; or state of safety or certainty against threats. The paper has identified that there are over 13.5 million out-of-school children in Nigeria and about 80% of them are in the northern part of the country. Moreover, available data has shown that 30% of pupils drop out of primary school and only 54% of them transit to junior secondary schools. The paper suggested that Government should continue to deploy its resources in the areas affected by the security challenges in order to overcome the acts of banditry, kidnapping and Boko Haram activities that have curtailed the delivery of basic education curriculum in those areas. It equally proffered that Government should continue to make concerted and realistic efforts towards reducing the level of poverty and unemployment- factors that could have contributed immensely to the security challenges being faced by the nation.

Key words: Curriculum, Delivery, Basic Education, Security Challenges

Introduction

The 1999 Nigerian Constitution, Section 14 Sub-Section (2)b, states inter-alia that “the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government”. This implies that Government as an institution is vested with the responsibility of security of lives and properties of the entire populace in the country. Invariably, the welfare of Nigerians including all institutions, places and settings is vested in the purview of government and should be ensured at all times. Be that as it may, no Nigerian should rest on his oars when



issues or concerns bordering on security are raised as without it nothing tangible will be achieved.

Presently, Nigeria is facing a number of different security challenges that include amongst others, banditry, kidnapping, insurgency, and threats of Boko Haram that have led to loss of lives, injuries, migration, destruction of properties, and poverty across the country with more severe impact in some parts of the Northern region. These crises, have cumulatively affected almost every facet of our lives including education at all levels. Boko Haram adherents in the North-East, though decimated to a certain extent, are still attacking people and seizing their properties including farmlands and forcing them to migrate to other areas thereby forcing children to stop attending schools and negatively affecting enrolment figures. This has also been the trend in some States of the North-west and North-central geopolitical zones where banditry and kidnappings have become virtually a daily occurrence, especially in remote areas. Aliyu (2021), in citing Bukarti a senior analyst on sahel security at the Tony Blair Institute, stated that the scale of the insecurity threatens the very fabric of Nigerian society: “with every attack, human lives are lost or permanently damaged and faith in democracy and the country is diminishing”.

The twin issues of banditry and kidnapping for ransom afflicting the people living in the Northern part of the country has also curtailed the movement of many people from one place to another in search of means of livelihood or in some instances forced them to migrate to safer locations thereby aggravating poverty level and disrupting the education of their children. Instances abound where students and pupils were kidnapped from their places of study and ransom had to be paid by their parents before they were released, which had greatly affected their search for knowledge as well as negatively affected Government’s enrolment drive particularly at the basic education level.

According to Jimada (2021), teachers, students and other staff are often victims of unpredicted violence that generates insecurity in the school. Official report has it that terrorist sect attacks had sent over 900 innocent people to early grave, counting since 1999. Moreover, it is obvious that some of these challenges may lead to incomplete delivery/implementation of the basic education curriculum to wit: Nursery, Primary and Junior Secondary Schools, which are the foundations of all other levels of education. It is a belief that if basic education is fully and well implemented there is the possibility of all future levels of education would be effective and lead to the achievement of national goals.

Curriculum

Rhode Island Department of Education (2021), curriculum is a standards-based sequence of planned experiences where students practice and achieve proficiency in content and applied learning skills. Curriculum is the central guide for all educators as to what is essential for teaching and learning, so that every student has access to rigorous academic



experiences. The structure, organization, and considerations in a curriculum are created in order to enhance student learning and facilitate instruction. Curriculum must include the necessary subjects/courses, goals, methods, materials and assessments to effectively support instruction and learning. Curriculum can also be regarded as the totality of all what happens (both academic and none academic activities) in a school. Academically, it directly includes amongst others, all the subjects/courses taught to pupils/students and instructional materials used to ease teaching and learning by teachers.

Curriculum Delivery/ Implementation

Curriculum delivery is the manner in which all courses will be taught in the school by highly qualified and specialist teachers in face-to-face time-tabled classes. The curriculum that is delivered by teachers to the learners can be referred to as what has been taught while implementation is the translation, carrying out, execution of a planned action or policy like curriculum. For implementation to be effective, method(s), strategy, model, specification, and or theory must be applied. As such, implementation is the action that must follow any preliminary thinking in order for something to effectively happen. Teachers are the chief implementers of the curriculum hence they can be considered as its heart-beat. Based on this, they must occupy a crucial role in curriculum decision making since they are the ones who decide on how to teach (methodology), what to use to ease learning (instructional materials), and break the curriculum into scheme of work as well as lesson plan in order to achieve the intended learning outcomes planned in the curriculum given to them.

Rhode Island (2021), curriculum delivery is the manner in which all courses will be taught in the school by highly qualified and specialist teachers in face-to-face time-tabled classes. A strict policy on maximum class sizes is operated to enable teachers have

opportunities for appropriate interaction with students. Teachers are encouraged to vary their teaching methodology in accordance with the needs of the students in their care and are expected to see a range of whole class teaching, group-work and one institution taking place across the school.

Basic Education

Basic Education comprises of early childhood education, primary education and junior secondary educational programme. Early childhood education is the education given to children from the age of 3 – 6 years that prepares them for primary education. Early childhood education, if effectively implemented, would promote a better progress to primary education. On the other hand, primary education can be globally considered as the first stage of the formal education programme. It is also the foundation of all other levels of formal education, which if effectively imparted, would help in promoting other levels. The other stage in the implementation of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme is the junior



secondary school. According to the National Policy on Education (2013), Basic Education is the education given to children aged 0-15 years that encompasses the early child care and development education (0-4 years) and 10 years of formal schooling. Early Child Care and Development Education however, is segmented into ages 0-4 years, situated in day-care or creches, fully in the hands of the private sector and social development services while that for ages 5-6 years (pre-primary) within the formal education sector.

According to Abdullahi (2014), the Nigerian government in 1999 introduced the Universal Basic Education programme in order to provide free primary and secondary education that is compulsory for all children aged 6-15 years. It was created after several unsuccessful attempts at improving education in the country. The programme, however, was not able to take off immediately after its launch due to lack of legal backing. Therefore, initial UBE-related activities were carried out only in areas of social mobilization, infrastructural development, provision of instructional materials, etc. The UBE programme only took off effectively with the signing of the UBE Act in April 2004. Although there have been some improvements in the enrolment of children in recent years, unfortunately its results have been limited and Nigeria's educational system is still rated very poorly in most international rankings.

Goals

In education, goals refer to the standards-based benchmarks or expectations to be achieved after teaching and learning takes place. Most often, goals are made explicit in the form of a scope and sequence of skills to be addressed. Goals must include the breadth and depth to which a student is expected to learn. Our education curriculum, just like that of all other countries, whether developed or developing ones, is planned based on goals and objectives to be achieved by both the nation, the community and those whom it is planned for. Similarly, the curriculum is planned to be delivered sequentially based on a specific duration to be covered.

According to Centre for Public Impact (2017), the objectives of the UBE initiative were stated at the outset, with some measurable targets and some less well-defined objectives as follows:

1. "Develop in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion;
2. "Provide free, universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school-going age;
3. "Reduce drastically the incidence of drop-out from the formal school system (through improved relevance, quality and efficiency);



4. "Cater for the learning needs of young persons who, for one reason or another, have had to interrupt their schooling, through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education;
5. "Ensure the acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills, as well as the ethical, moral, and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning."

However, due to the security challenges being faced by some States in the Northern part of the country, most or all of their schools are completely or partially closed with people migrating with their families from one area to another in search of security and peace. This has also caused the abrupt withdrawal of pupils or their transfer to other schools where feasible, which could lead to backwardness of such pupils thereby becoming another great challenge to them, their parents, the community and the nation at large. The security challenges of Boko Haram, banditry and kidnapping are what this paper is trying to evaluate in relation to the implementation of Basic Education.

Security

Security can be regarded as the state of being secure from what would make you feel afraid, and or feel threaten. Cambridge (2021), defines security as protection of a person, building, organization, or country against threats such as crime or attacks by foreign countries. To Collins English Dictionary (2021), it is the state of being or feeling secure; freedom from fear, anxiety, danger, doubt; state of safety or certainty. Security as Dasuki (2013) puts it, is defined as absence of insecurity as a result of actions of law enforcement agencies stressing that security is understood to be the job of the defense force of the national frontiers and of the police inside the country. Such perception sums up security to be equal to a system of law and order maintenance.

However, Dasuki emphasized that the dynamics of our society have since altered that configuration of security to now include consideration for societally generated crises such as riots, demonstrations, secret cult-related criminal acts, terrorism, drug-trafficking, intra and inter-ethnic strife, religious intolerance, advanced fee fraud, anti-government campaigns, armed robberies, hijacking, kidnapping and a host of others that threaten lives and properties and indeed the peace and tranquility of man and society. This now portrays security currently as everybody's business, and a business in which everybody has a role to play and a stake to protect. The essence of a country's security is therefore pointed towards the honest concern with the wellbeing, welfare and interest of all citizens, and the preservation of the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity against external aggression.

Security Challenges



Insecurity can be regarded as the state of lacking confidence or assurance of something or somebody or group of people, having no self-doubt or state of being insecure. According to Herd, Puhl and Costigan (2013), security challenges are ‘emergent’ or ‘emerging’ when the wider community of security experts begin to discuss and debate a given issue as a prelude to developing, resourcing and then implementing appropriate policy responses. Some security challenges are “abovo” – they emerge onto the policy landscape at incredible speed, complete and entire, rather than slowly over a long gestation period. For some institutions, the ‘real’ emerging challenge is defined as much by institutional and cultural change needed to enable more efficient, effective and legitimate policy response as it is by the inherent complexity of the challenges themselves. The highest priority challenges (e.g. climatological, nuclear, biological, health and agriculture-related) are those that threaten the survival of people and institutions while the second order priority challenges undermine essential ways of life and the fabric of state-society relations, the nature of democratic governance and the integrity of the ‘social contract’.

Consequences of Security challenges on the Delivery of Basic Education Curriculum

Insecurity can lead to failure of doing something or successfully achieving a planned action like the delivery of the basic education curriculum in some States of Northern Nigeria as a result of threat of attacks by Boko Haram, banditry and kidnappings. The consequences of these dastardly acts in relation to the implementation of the basic education curriculum are:

1. Low enrolment or poor attendance of schools
2. Closure of schools

Low Enrolment or poor Attendance of Schools

Insecurity in Nigeria is becoming an issue, especially in some northern parts of the country, which has led to the frequent closure of schools thereby affecting the implementation of the UBE programme. It is pertinent to highlight that one of the objectives of the UBE is to ensure that all Nigerian school-aged children are enrolled into primary schools. In any education system, peace and tranquility is an antidote for successful teaching and learning while regular school attendance of students is essential to learning, which will all lead to covering of the scheme or the curriculum at large by teachers. There is no gain saying the fact that any pupil who attends school regularly would likely learn more and become more successful in school than the one that is not punctual.

According to Umaru (2014), regular school attendance is an important ingredient for academic success and a successful life. School attendance habit is formed early in life. A child who develops good attendance habit in the early years of education is more likely to continue throughout the school career. In addition, a child who misses school has missed a carefully planned sequences of instruction. Patrick (2012), also observes that such a child



misses active learning experiences and class participation, the opportunity to ask questions and is more likely to fall behind and drop out of the school. Umaru in citing Fafunwa who urged that in the early 1980s that dropping out of school was one of the most serious problems that had continued to bedevil the Nigerian educational system from the colonial administration up to independence in 1960 and even beyond.

The issue of general insecurity in some parts of northern Nigeria has compelled school children to drop out of school. As such, parents should not be blamed when children are not enrolled or stop attending schools since the situation is beyond their control and no parent would like to see his child killed or injured or even kidnapped for ransom in the quest for knowledge. Although different organizations and governments have advanced a variety of definitions of human security, constant attacks have made it even harder for teachers and other stakeholders to persuade parents to allow their children stay at school.

According to Umaru (2014), the level of school attendance from the registers in schools under the crisis situation in Damaturu metropolis revealed that the highest school attendance of pupils in all the schools was 29.26% in Damaturu International School with males accounting for 49.33% while the females was 50.66%. At Sani Daura Primary School the recorded attendance was as low as 5.57% with males accounting for 69.56% and the females was 30.43%. On the other hand, Model Primary School and Nayi-Nawa Primary School recorded zero attendance of pupils after the Boko Haram attack. The general attendance of female pupils appeared to be low when compared to that of male pupils, which implied that the state of insecurity had significant effect on the schools resulting to low attendance of students in all the schools in Damaturu Metropolis.

According to Ojukwu (2017), a conducive environment enhances growth and development. Students feel happy in a peaceful and friendly environment. It is observed that where cases of insecurity are recorded, such as the activities of Boko Haram, kidnappings and banditry, the death of children and or their parents is also a factor that would affect basic education programme due to poor enrolment or dropout by children of school age. Challenges like armed robbery, bombings, rape, and killings amongst others, which have become regular occurrences and have characterized life in Nigeria, especially in some States of Northern Nigeria have led to poor enrolment or attendance to school.

Eseibo UNICEF (2013), urged that even though primary education is officially free and compulsory, about 10.5 million of the country's children aged 5-14 years are not in school. Only 61% of children aged 6-11 years regularly attend primary schools and only 35.6% of children aged 36-59 months receive early childhood education. In the northern part of the country, the picture was even bleaker, with a net attendance rate of 53%. He added that gender, including geography and poverty are important factors in the pattern of educational marginalization. States in the North-east and North-west have female primary net attendance rates of 47.7% and 47.3% respectively, meaning that more than half of the girls were not in school. The education deprivation in northern Nigeria is driven by various factors, including



economic barriers and socio-cultural norms and practices that discourage attendance in formal education, especially for girls. According to Lehr (2014), the noble goals of education can never be achieved in a vacuum. They would be achieved in a conducive and peaceful school environment. If there is a feeling of insecurity within and outside the school environment, both students and teachers are likely to be deterred and this may inhibit academic performance of the students.

Closure of Schools

As a result of increase in the rate of banditry and kidnappings for ransom, some States in northern Nigeria have partially or completely closed down their schools, with the boarding ones being the worst hit. This measure has no doubt, significantly affected the implementation of the UBE plan. According to Owonikoko (2021), there are over 13.5 million out-of-school children in Nigerian today and about 80% of them are in the northern part of Nigeria. Moreover, according to available data, 30% of pupils drop out of primary school and only 54% of pupils transit to junior secondary schools. While these figures are attributable to extreme poverty, child labour, and early marriage in girls, current insecurity however, takes the lion share. He added that about 800 secondary school and university students have been kidnapped in coordinated attacks by terrorists and bandits. Similarly, with the closure of the schools due to security challenges and the poverty ravaging the core north, these students have become ready targets for recruitment by the terrorists. Consequently, the risk of schooling today in some States of northern Nigeria is death. Where going to school could be compared to charging into battle amid a swarm of bullets, what chances do the average Nigerian child have to a better education? That is why some parents now prefer sending their children (boys and girls) to hawk on the streets or even choose early marriage for the girls rather than send them to school.

Akinkuotu (2021), highlighted that according to figures collated from several reports, at least 768 students have been abducted by bandits within a space of 78 days. The figure includes 344 school children of Government Science Secondary School, Kankara, kidnapped on December 11, 2020 and 80 pupils of Islamiyya School, Mahuta all in Katsina State who were abducted on December 20, 2020. Others are 27 boys at Government College, Kagara, Niger State, kidnapped on February 17, 2021; and 317 girls of Government Girls Secondary School, Jangebe in Zamfara State. In addition, apart from these abductions, 112 girls kidnapped from Chibok, in Borno State in 2014 and one other girl (Leah Sharibu) from Dapchi in Yobe State are still in Boko Haram captivity.

Umaru continued that Zamfara State is the most affected in terms of the closure with all its boarding schools shut till further notice in response to the abductions while Kaduna



State is yet to reopen its schools. Similarly, as a precautionary measure, Kano State Government ordered that 10 schools plus 5 health training institutions located on the outskirts be closed. Moreover, Yobe State government ordered boarding school students to go home amidst fear of a Boko Haram attack, exempting only SS3 students. There is no gain saying the fact that as part of measures to tackle the security challenges, schools in Niger, Katsina, Jigawa and Sokoto States have also been either partially or totally closed. With the measures taken, many parents in the Northern Nigeria who beat all odds to send their children to school are perhaps, left to rue their choice and rethink their decision due to the worsening insecurity situation in the region, which is manifesting in the increasing cases of abduction of school children in recent times. Although the affected State governments regretted the decisions taken, they believed it was the most sensible thing to do for now pending improvement in the security situation.

Conclusion

Security challenges ranging from Boko Haram activities, banditry and kidnappings for ransom have undoubtedly affected basic education curriculum delivery in some States of northern Nigeria. Due to the insecurity situation, schools have either been partially or completely closed, which has led to non-completion of curriculum delivery at the early childhood education, primary and junior secondary school levels thereby aggravating the school-aged children drop out problem not only in the affected States but nationally. It is paramount to stress that non-complete delivery of the curriculum is bound to affect the realization of its goals and objectives at whatever level of education, and in this instance, may negate the UBE programme in the long term. Although Governments of the affected States have tried to justify the decisions they took, yet stakeholders viewed the developments as not a cheering news to the northern region and the education sector in general, considering that schools were not long ago reopened after several months of closure due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In a nutshell, the closure of schools in the affected States may put the academic dreams of many school children in jeopardy unless concrete steps are taken to redress the situation.

Suggestions

The paper offers the following suggestions:

1. Government should continue to deploy its resources in the areas affected by the security challenges in order to overcome the acts of banditry, kidnapping and Boko Haram activities that have curtailed the delivery of basic education curriculum in those areas.
2. Government should continue to make concerted and realistic efforts towards reducing poverty and unemployment levels- factors that could have contributed immensely to the security challenges being faced by the nation.



3. Government should make schools' environment more secure and at the same time give priority attention to the introduction of e-learning at all levels to facilitate unhindered teaching and learning.
4. Communities should complement Government efforts in tackling the security challenges by not supporting or collaborating with any person or group deemed as security threat and at the same time reporting such person or group to the relevant agencies for prompt action.

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